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Book Part

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Uschi Schmitz

**Efficient Use of Resources in Sports Associations –
Key Success Factors of the German Field Hockey Association**

in:

Zur Ökonomik von Spitzenleistungen im internationalen Sport

Herausgegeben von Martin-Peter Büch, Wolfgang Maennig und
Hans-Jürgen Schulke

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Efficient Use of Resources in Sports Associations – Key Success Factors of the German Field Hockey Association

Uschi Schmitz

Introduction

The topic of this contribution is the efficient management of resources in sports federations, wherewith a closer view behind the factors of success of the German Field Hockey Federation will be given. Therefore, a few facts and some general information about German field hockey will be presented. Field hockey is the most successful team sport in Germany. The responsible sports federation, the *Deutscher Hockey-Bund* (DHB), held six out of ten major international titles in 2007. For example, the German National Team Women was European Champion indoor (2006) and outdoor (2007), and won Olympic Gold in Athens 2004 in a fantastic final against the Netherlands. The National Team Men was World Champion (indoor) in 2007, European Champion (indoor) in 2003 as well as World Champion (outdoor) in 2006.

There are about 400 clubs that are members of the DHB. Around 70,000 people play field hockey in Germany and it is a sport for both men and women of all age groups. About half of the field hockey players are under the age of 18. It is a family sport with an extremely loyal target group. The levels of income and education in this group are higher than average, and within in the field hockey family, a lot of medium-sized enterprises are – mostly on club level – involved as partners and sponsors.

Interviewing field hockey players and spectators on different occasions revealed some interesting details:

- More than 60 % of the people questioned were college graduates, and even more than 30 % had at least some academic education.

- The net income of over 50 % is higher than 2,500 Euros, which allows 42 % to spend more than 250 Euros per month on consumer goods.
- In combination with the fact that 57 % prefer to buy products from field hockey-related companies, field hockey is a very interesting platform for potential sponsors.

Key Success Factors

In discussing the future of this sport, one has to look at the outset situation in the year 2000. Without a doubt, the members of the “field hockey family” were well situated within society. Nevertheless, the DHB had worked out the following major points in an effort to secure the success and further development of field hockey in Germany:

- the numbers of field hockey players would need to be increased,
- more public interest would need to be raised,
- and, last but not least, more sponsors and partners would need to be found in order to reach all goals.

A look back after seven years demonstrates that the DHB is on the right track to reach success. Some of the sub-goals were reached. But, one might ask: Why did it work the way the DHB wanted it to? To offer some explanations, the development will be broken down to the three major factors of success, which will be introduced in chronological order. This is not intended to be a judgement concerning the importance of the particular factors.

To secure the past and present high standard of performance and success of all eight national teams, the DHB long ago installed a detailed, closely-knit talent-scouting system. This system is constantly updated and developed by the head coaches, and it allows them to scout all players and then follow the development and improvement of all the ambitious field hockey players who have the ability to play on a high level. At a very early stage, integrated non-hockey specialists were introduced where professional help was needed (e.g. psychologists, nutrition consultants, and team builders). For more than 20 years, Bernhard Peters was mainly responsible for these tasks. The former national coach, who is now working in professional soccer, was a visionary looking for improvements and was trying to work more professionally than the rest. For example, almost 100 % of the players of the national teams participating in the Olympics have undergone the federation’s training program from

the very beginning. And a few other examples show how successful the young players have been in the past and today: The women's U18 team became European Champion in 2002 and European Vice Champion in 2003 and 2005. In 2007 the team finished third at the European Championships. The men's U18 team won the European Championship in the same year.

Another major factor of success was and continues to be the new and updated structure of the federation. About eight years ago the executive committee decided to introduce a new structure to the member clubs, which quickly passed through the first general assembly. Ever since, it endeavours to find the right structure somewhere between a modern sports federation and a company. It was the aim to enable the professional staff to run the federation while the executive committee acts as the supervisory board.

Figure 1: Organizational Structure of the DHB

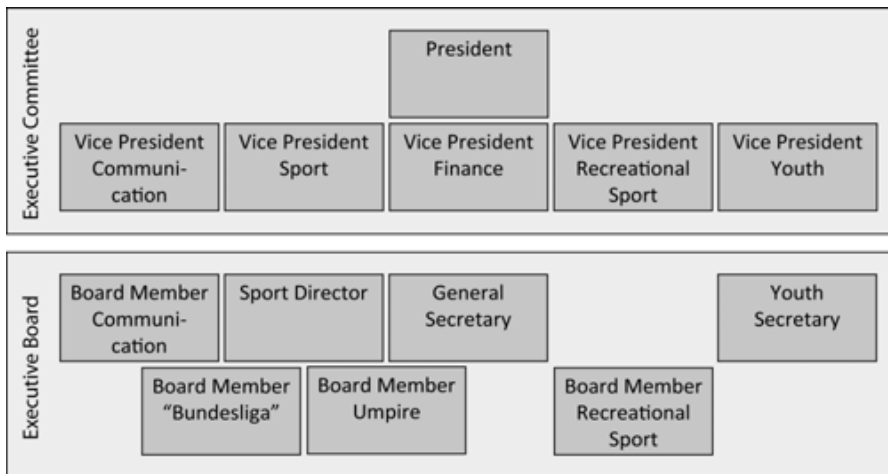


Figure 1 shows the honorary Executive Committee in the top panel and the Executive Board in the bottom panel where the top panel consists of full-time staff members at the office in Mönchengladbach. The bottom panel has honorary members as well. The latest step in creating the current structure was made in 2005 and seems to suit the needs of the federation very well. The DHB was one of the first sports federations in Germany to update its structure and it has often been asked by various sides to share experiences and information

on this topic. The major benefit is that the decision-making process for the professional staff is much quicker now. Before, honorary decision-makers were not available on short hand and sometimes just did not have the knowledge necessary to make decisions on a specific topic.

Last but definitely not least, the so-called “Major Events Offensive” will be presented. This means that the DHB has set a focus on hosting world-level events in Germany. From DHB’s point of view, this is maybe the strongest tool to reach the goals. Step by step, larger media coverage was achieved and, especially, TV coverage of field hockey was established in this way. The attractiveness for partners and sponsors was raised and, in the end, the number of DHB members and active field hockey players in Germany were also increased.

The “Major Event Offensive” started in 2002 by organizing the Champions Trophy Men in Cologne – a tournament of the six best teams in the world. Beginning with this tournament, the standard of the tournaments was raised every time. Over the following years, the DHB was in the lucky position to be host and organizer of:

- the Indoor World Cup Men and Women 2003 in Leipzig
- the General Assembly 2004 of the International Hockey Federation
- the European Championship Men 2005 in Leipzig

The absolute top event took place in 2006 just after the FIFA World Cup: the BDO Hockey World Cup Men held in Mönchengladbach. But it was, from a sporting perspective, even more successful as the German national field hockey team won the Cup. In 2007 the DHB introduced a new format for the Under 21 national teams, the DKV Junior Trophy 2007 in Mönchengladbach. As it is very important to keep on pushing to promote field hockey, the DHB is preparing another world-level tournament and is proud to have received the contract to become host of another women’s tournament: the Champions Trophy Women 2008 staged again in Mönchengladbach.

On the road to success there were a few major points which have been very supportive in the further development of field hockey in Germany. Very important was the fact that the city of Mönchengladbach, in cooperation with the regional government of North Rhine Westphalia, made the construction of the first national field hockey stadium possible. The stadium is unique and probably the most modern stadium for field hockey in the world. In spring 2006 the opening of the new national hockey stadium was celebrated. On September 17, 2006 the German National Team Men became World Champion

in Mönchengladbach. The stadium was nearly sold out during the whole tournament and TV coverage was better than for any previous tournament (apart from the Olympics). In the opinion of the International Hockey Federation, the BDO Hockey World Cup 2006 was the “Best Ever” field hockey event.

To emphasize the success of the World Cup, the following facts and figures are presented:

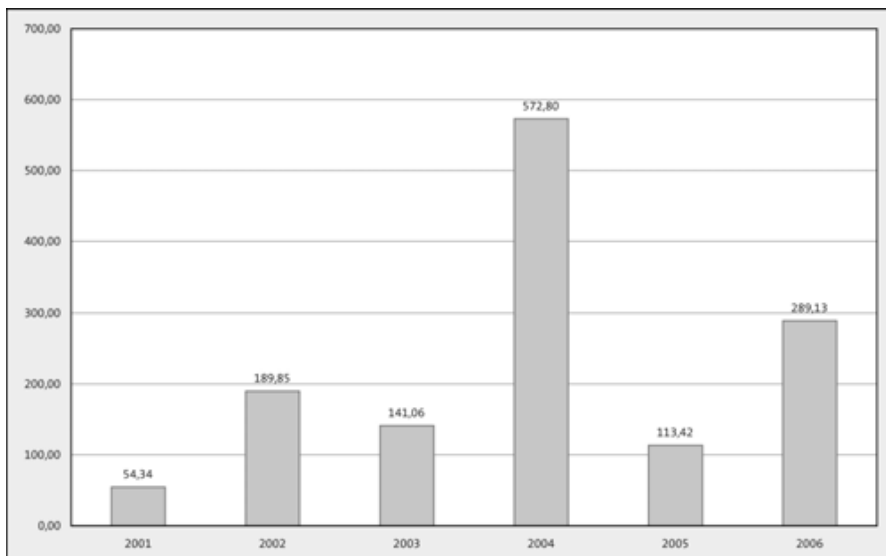
- Nearly 100,000 spectators from Germany and abroad visited the BDO Hockey World Cup 2006.
- Over 645 million viewers were reached in over 150 countries during more than 539 hours of worldwide TV broadcasting.
- In Germany over 121 million viewers were reached during 83 hours of TV broadcasting.

The tournament was not only distributed via TV all around the world; the event was also widely covered in the Internet as well:

- www.worldhockey.org had more than 3.9 million page views.
- The event page www.hockeyworldcup.de had more than 2.5 million page views.
- Even www.fieldhockey.tv, a platform for Internet TV coverage, had more than 156,000 users.

Media reports were published in all important national and a lot of international newspapers and magazines. All this was possible because of the work of more than 300 accredited journalists and over 180 TV-assistants located all around the venue.

Especially TV coverage has improved since the DHB started the event offensive. As can be seen in Figure 2, 54.34 million viewers watched field hockey on TV in 2001. This improved to over 100 million viewers in the subsequent years with two extreme outliers. During the period from 2001 to 2006, the year 2004 has – by far – the largest TV figures due to the Olympic Games. Regarding TV ratings, the DHB is in a very comfortable position every four years because people traditionally watch every kind of sport when their own country is successful. But nevertheless, a constant development can be seen when comparing 2001 to 2006. Due to the World Cup held in Germany, 289.13 million viewers watched field hockey.

Figure 2: Development of TV Coverage 2001–2006 (Million Viewers)

Today, field hockey is far more present on TV than it was in 2000. There is broad national and international coverage. For Germany, the DHB has a contract with the two public TV stations ARD and ZDF. Additionally, the DHB has a very good contact with regional public TV stations (subdivisions of ARD). Thus, all world-level events hosted by the DHB have been broadcasted either live or recorded as a result of these cooperations. Furthermore, EUROSPORT is televising field hockey very often even though the DHB is aware that – at the moment – field hockey is still a bit of a stopgap.

The DHB has several sponsors and partners. Figure 3 gives an overview of the contract situation in 2007.

The main partner Hyundai re-signed the contract just shortly after the World Cup, and the premium partner BDO also re-signed for a further four years with an even bigger volume than before. With DKV Health Insurance and Merck Self_Medication, the DHB could add new premium partners after winning the World Cup. Completing the pyramid of sponsors, the DHB has several partners in the area of sports, media, and charity as well as co-partners/suppliers.

Figure 3: Pyramid of Sponsors and Partners



Outcome and Outlook

The outcome in 2007 is clear and shows that the DHB is on the right way:

1. The DHB has more members! The number of field hockey players in Germany increased by 13 % between 2000 and 2006, and the DHB has to note that in some regions clubs are having difficulties coping with the requested new memberships. They need coaches, facilities and sports equipment at their disposal to offer proper field hockey training to their members. Now, the count of field hockey players is nearly 70,000.
2. The DHB has more public interest! The increase of live TV coverage as well as field hockey increasingly being part of sports news on TV broadcastings, in newspapers and magazines signals that field hockey and the DHB are noticed by the public. But nevertheless, the DHB needs to try everything to further improve field hockey's TV coverage. Thus, officials are thinking of new ways of presenting field hockey; e.g. by installing a camera on the helmet of the goalkeeper or a rail camera along the sideline.

3. The DHB has more sponsors and partners! All partners involved in the World Cup renewed their contracts after this tremendous event and, also, new partners have joined.

But, of course, the expansion of field hockey does not always go smoothly. The DHB has had to manage extra work. Therefore, the strategy has been to cooperate with a sponsoring agency and a press agency as they have the resources to present professional solutions for the association's needs. The DHB hired additional staff and is currently working out a restructuring plan for the head office as the expansion at the office was not based on a strategic plan so far. This expansion of the head office has been driven by the necessity to handle the large amount of work that has to be done. But the expansion shall go on and the DHB strongly believes that the key factors – success in the sport, further development of the federations structure and the head office as well, and most important, continuing to push field hockey by means of the event offensive – are still valid.

In the future, the DHB will try to act innovatively more often. For example, a new tournament format for the U21 national teams was introduced, which will hopefully be played in the next years in other countries as well. This tournament gave Germany's young and most promising players for the London 2012 Olympics the chance to test under real tournament conditions. And, of course, the DHB will bid for more world-level events. Currently, the DHB is talking to the European Hockey Federation about the European Nations Championship and with the International Hockey Federation about a women's World Cup tournament. And, recently, a nationwide event offensive has been started as well. Here, the aim is to bring field hockey to people all over Germany. Clubs were selected and asked to host matches of the national teams. Preferably, the women's and men's teams should be at the same venue at the same time. In addition to the matches, the hosting club has been asked to offer different kinds of programs, entertainment and a certain standard of presentation. Here, the DHB receives strong support from its partners, while its partners obtain the chance to get their local dealer or sales department in touch with the field hockey family. By experience, this model substantiates, so far, the acceptance of sponsorship within companies. In the same way, field hockey clubs are playing a part in this sponsorship as well. Some clubs already entered in negotiations with local dealers of DHB's partners.

In summary, sports federations have to have an efficient management in all parts of their work. Just when the DHB started to undertake the important update of the internal structure and when the first big events were hosted, all components made sense. Finally, the DHB has been successful in sports ever since, but has only become stronger after adding more factors of success.